

EXCURSIONS HEMI-SYNCING TOWARD BETHLEHEM

"I WILL GUIDE YOU NOW IN THIS MOVEMENT FROM FOCUS TEN TO FOCUS TWELVE," says the tape-recorded, all-American voice of Robert Monroe (photo, bottom right), Mr. Out-of-Body Experience (OBE) himself. To a flickering audio beat called Hemi Sync, the author of *Journeys out of the Body* is an inner-space traffic controller, announcing arrivals and departures from Star-Trekkian altered states.

With my eyes closed, I sit in a tiny New York City apartment with six other

cosmic voyagers and a guide. Our "Gateway Outreach Excursion Workshop" is a mini-version of the rites of Monroe's Monroe Institute in Faber, Virginia, the world's best-known OBE flight academy. As Allesyn Moore, our softspoken, rather school-marmish guide, tells it, here is the history of the Hemi Sync device: In 1958 Robert Monroe, then a broadcast executive, had a series of OBEs and became convinced that consciousness extends beyond the physical self. His revelations became wedded to his knowledge of sound, specifically the Frequency Following Response, which is basically the principle that certain sound patterns have the power to change the fre-

quency and amplitude of a person's brain waves.

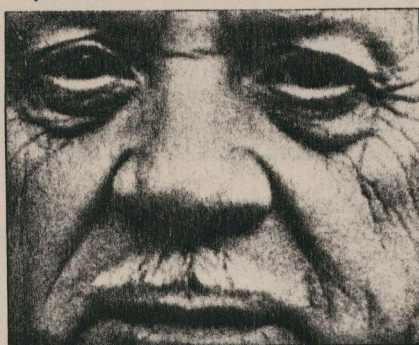
So he designed sequences of pulsed beats that, pumped into each ear via stereo headphones, coax the brain's twin hemispheres to pull together to "hear" a third, ghostly beat. Classic experiments at the Menninger Foundation in Topeka, Kansas, demonstrated that Zen adepts with twenty years' experience could call up this special state of hemispheric synchrony at will. Monroe claimed his apparatus could induce an equivalent transcendence in minutes—a kind of microwave nirvana.

"Technology has sped up," Moore tells us, "and the evolution of consciousness is speeding up equally. Why not cut the enlightenment process by twenty or forty years, so you'll have twenty or forty years to be in that state?"

Why not indeed?

"TEN...ELEVEN...YOUR CONSCIOUSNESS IS EXPANDING MORE AND MORE," says the tape in my ears. There's a *whoosh* like the space shuttle reentering the atmosphere, then "TWELVE." A band of pressure tightens around my head, and all sensation drains from my body. Moore had said that at this level the mind would communicate through symbols or intuitive flashes, but I have the kind of daydreams you have on the crosstown bus. And my fellow travelers? One woman loses the crystal she was holding and deduces that an entity or force has sucked it into the Void. A man feels a spiraling energy in his body. Another man, a writer, gets an idea for a restaurant review. Two people sleep.

Meanwhile, back at the Institute (as I later ascertained with a phone call to its projects director, Leslie France), hard-core "explorers" are moving far beyond OBEs to what Monroe calls



the "farthest reaches of altered time and space." From there many of them, including Monroe, channel back bulletins from nonmaterial entities and extraterrestrials about the structure of the universe and the future of the planet.

Could this stuff be dangerous? "We've never received any information that it's harmful to people," France assures me.

With the weekend's last tape, we float in Level 12, asking our higher

selves for a revelation, which we later share. "I saw a London broil," says the writer, looking chagrined. "In another tape I got the message that I was hungry, and now this." Silence reigns as Moore ponders an answer.

"Trust your process," she says with a smile. "Sometimes our higher selves give us messages that don't make any sense." —Tracy Cochran

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